

ECUMENICAL PRESS SERVICE

Published under the auspices of the: World Council of Churches · International Missionary Council
World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations · World Young Women's Christian Association
World Student Christian Federation · World Council of Christian Education · United Bible Societies

EDITORIAL OFFICE · 17 ROUTE DE MALAGNOU · GENEVA · SWITZERLAND
TEL. 36 71 30 · CABLES OIKOUMENE U.S. ENQUIRIES: WCC, 475, RIVERSIDE DRIVE, NEW YORK 27: TEL. RIVERSIDE 9-4887



No. 41/28th Year 3rd November, 1961

On Other Pages

WCC Third Assembly.	2
British Churches Ask China in UN.	3
Heresy Trial of Dutch Reformed Theologian Draws Criticism	4
Roman Catholics-Protestants in India Discuss Ecumenism.	5
Bishop Lilje Asks WCC Intervention if Churches Separated.	6
CCIA Director Denounces Soviet Test	7
RC Theologian Says Vatican Council Will have "Ecumenical Aims".	8
South African Church Defends Apartheid.	9
In Brief.	10

Week of Unity Observances Planned

(Geneva) - Christians in more than 50 countries around the world will again offer prayers for an end to the divisions which separate them during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18 - 25.

The theme of this year's observance will be service - "I am in the midst of you as One who serves" (Luke 22:27). This is one of the three main themes of the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, which will be held in New Delhi, India, November 18 - December 6.

The WCC's Faith and Order Commission, which sponsors the annual observance, has prepared a special leaflet containing suggested prayers and Bible readings as an aid for public prayer and private devotions.

The same theme will also be used in the leaflet prepared for Roman Catholics participating in the Week of Prayer observances sponsored by the Association Unité Chrétienne, in Lyon, France.

"The observance of the week has grown considerably in the last few years," reports Dr. Lukas Vischer, Faith and Order research secretary. "The number of leaflets ordered and used has increased, and there have been several new translations. We are especially glad that there is a growing interest in the week in Asian countries."

No. 41 - 3rd November, 1961

However, Dr. Vischer noted that, in addition to the wider use of the leaflet, much more thought is being given to the preparation of the week in many countries.

In many areas, he said, it has become an occasion for new ecumenical endeavours, such as inter-confessional Bible study, retreats, discussions between representatives of different confessions, and conferences aimed at establishing deeper mutual understanding.

Many congregations have followed the suggestion of Dr. Oscar Cullman, professor of New Testament and Patristics at the University of Basel, and are making contributions on behalf of the poor of another confession. In Switzerland, for example, Roman Catholics recently gave 12,000 Swiss francs for a Protestant missionary hospital in the Sudan. Protestants have also made similar contributions to Catholic causes.

(A copy of the leaflet of prayers for the Week of Prayer is enclosed with this issue of EPS.)

WCC Third Assembly

(Geneva) - Leaders of the World Council of Churches will meet in New Delhi, India, November 18 - December 6 for what promises to be one of the most important church meetings of this generation.

The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches will bring representatives of the 175 Protestant, Anglican, and Orthodox member churches to the capital of India. In all, there will be nearly 1,000 churchmen and women - 625 of them official delegates and the rest observers, advisers, fraternal delegates, and special guests.

"Jesus Christ, the Light of the World" is the theme of this first World Council Assembly to be held on the continent of Asia. Among other firsts for the big meeting:

1. The first time the two ecumenical streams of world Christianity - mission and unity - have been brought into a single organization. The World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council will be integrated.
2. The first time the Assembly has been asked to consider the big Russian Orthodox Church inside the Soviet Union for membership. If accepted, the church will come into continuous contact with other Christians after many years of isolation.
3. The first time Roman Catholic observers will attend a World Council of Churches' Assembly. Five observers have been named by the new Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity.

The Assembly provides the major forum for Christian leaders to discuss Christian unity and to chart the course of the organization the churches have formed to promote this cause. It met last in 1954 in Evanston, Illinois.

Within the broad outline of the main theme, church leaders will focus attention on "Witness", "Service", and "Unity", dealing respectively with taking the Christian message to those outside the churches, Christian responsibility to the whole of society, and unity among the churches.

Dr. Joseph A. Sittler, Lutheran theologian and professor at the Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago, is the major speaker on "Unity". Speaking on "Witness" is Dr. P. D. Devanandan, director of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society at Bangalore, India. Professor Masao Takenaka of Doshisha University, Kyoto, Japan, will speak on "Service". These speeches will set the stage for concentrated study of the main themes by delegates.

A solemn service of worship and thanksgiving will inaugurate the 18-day Assembly on Sunday morning, November 19. It will be held in a huge tent or "Shamiana" to be erected especially for the service and other Assembly events open to the public.

A colourful and impressive procession of the 625 official Assembly delegates will be led by the World Council's five presidents and Dr. Christian Baeta of Ghana, chairman of the International Missionary Council.

All five presidents will participate in the opening service. U Ba Hmyin, Rangoon, Burma, of the Burma Baptist Convention, will preach the opening sermon. Dr. Baeta will lead the service of thanksgiving.

The Sunday afternoon session will be an historic occasion. At this time the World Council Assembly delegates will be asked to approve plans for the integration of the Council with the International Missionary Council. The majority of the IMC's member councils have approved.

The integration marks the uniting in one organization of two bodies which have symbolized the search for Christian unity in the twentieth century. The IMC was formed in 1921 as a result of plans stemming from the 1910 Edinburgh Conference on the World Mission of the Church. The World Council of Churches came into formal being in 1948 in Amsterdam, Holland. The two have worked "in association" from the beginning.

Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, will speak on "The Calling of the World Council of Churches" in the opening session, Sunday afternoon, November 19. Bishop J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, general secretary of the International Missionary Council, will speak on "The Missionary Dimension of the Ecumenical Movement."

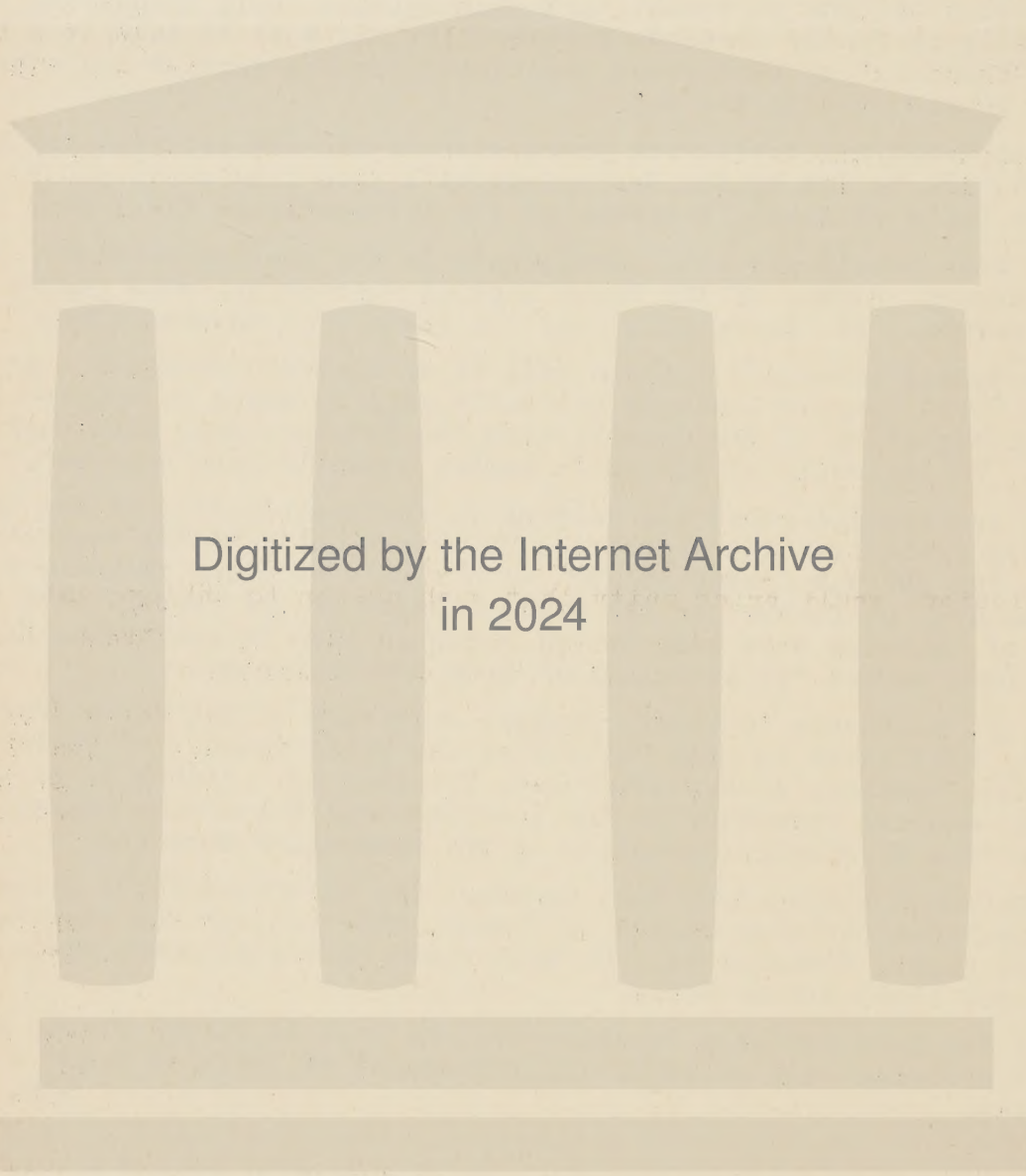
A Lutheran bishop from East Germany, Dr. Gottfried Noth, Dresden, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony, will deliver the keynote address on Sunday night, November 19. He will speak on the Assembly theme, "Jesus Christ, the Light of the World."

All the main Assembly sessions will be held in Vigyan Bhavan Hall, a modern conference hall built by the government of India to house a UNESCO conference.
EPS, Geneva

British Churches Ask China in UN

(London) - A resolution urging the British government to press upon the United Nations the need to pursue negotiations to bring China into its membership has been adopted by the half-yearly meeting of the British Council of Churches.

The action came in support of a motion by Dr. G. M. Dryburgh, chairman of the Church of Scotland's Commission to Study Communism, who told the delegates that whatever their political philosophy might be, one could not possibly believe there would be peace if 700 million persons, who are becoming more and more effective in world affairs, are left out of the international body.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

Speaking in support of the motion the Bishop of Sheffield, Dr. Leslie Hunter, said he thought the United States was doing a great disservice to world peace by allowing her fear of Communist China to force the western nations into a morally indefensible position.

The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Fisher of Lambeth commented that he believed most Britons thought that China should be in the United Nations, but that justice and timing were "different matters."

Earlier Lord Fisher told the Council that the Roman Catholic Church had become an ally of other churches instead of an enemy.

"This is a most stupendous change," he said, "a complete new chapter in world history as well as in Christian history. Salvation begins for any group of people only when they are able to say they are sorry, and that they were partly wrong. The Church of Rome has begun to say that, and so have we all."

EPS, Geneva

Divorce Missions From Sectarianism, United Church Leader Urges

(Grand Rapids) - A strong plea that Protestant missions and service abroad be "divorced completely from sectarian creed" as a major step toward church union was made here by the new president of the Board for World Ministries of the United Church of Christ (USA).

Addressing the denomination's Midwest Regional Meeting, Dr. William C. Nelson of Akron, Ohio, told the delegates that Protestant union in world missions would bring unity that much nearer to achievement.

"Whether it be by actual union with missionary and service agencies of other denominations or through extending the limits of co-operation," he stated, "we ought now to consider seriously the possibility of combining as much of our efforts as possible with as many groups as will share their experience with us."

"Perhaps it is in such active areas of work and service that such a proposed merger as contemplated in the Blake-Pike proposal ought to begin to function. After all, doctrine divides - service unites."

The Blake-Pike proposal envisages a union of the United Church, the Methodist Church, the Protestant Episcopal Church, and the Presbyterian Church in the USA, as a first step toward Christian unity. Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, United Presbyterian stated clerk, originated the proposal which was quickly endorsed by Episcopal Bishop James A. Pike of California.

Dr. Nelson suggested that as a starter toward mission unity the United Church Board for World Ministries and mission agencies of other denominations should merge with the United Church of Canada's World Missions Board.

EPS, Geneva

Heresy Trial of Dutch Reformed Theologian Draws Criticism

(Johannesburg) - A secret church trial of a theological professor on charges of teaching heresies has brought a barrage of criticism from many quarters.

The Commission of the General Conference of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk is trying the Rev. Albert S. Geyser, professor of New Testament at the University of Pretoria, on charges made against him by three of his students.

Professor Geyser, an outspoken critic of the government's apartheid policy, has denied the charges which grew out of his opposition to the church's stand against admitting non-whites to membership. He has urged that the church law barring them be "tested according to the Scriptures."

In addition to being accused of heresy "involving New Testament interpretations", he has also been charged with failure to observe an order prohibiting criticism of the church's laws and decisions outside denominational circles.

The parent Hervormde Kerk in Holland sent a public telegram to the commission urging that the trial be abandoned. As a result, the trial chairman, A. J. Oosthuizen, said that he felt that publicity given to the charges had "created the wrong impression in South Africa and overseas."

Although church members have been admitted to the hearing under a pledge that they would not discuss them with reporters, accounts and photographs of the first day's proceedings were splashed over the front pages of newspapers.

The Johannesburg English-language Rand Daily Mail editorially condemned the trial, pointing out that Professor Geyser is employed by the tax-supported university and that he is entitled to a public hearing of his views and answers to his accusers.

"Apart from the hearing being secret, Mr. Geyser is denied the services of a stenographer and not even a tape recording of the proceedings will be allowed", the editorial noted. "How will this look to the outside world? Have we really gone back to the days of the Inquisition?"

Similarly, a colleague of Professor Geyser, who gave evidence on his behalf, compared the proceedings with what happened in Nazi Germany.

"The Germans also had their heresy trial", said Professor Adrianus van Selms, professor of Semitic languages. "Karl Barth, the greatest living theologian, was exiled from Germany in 1933."

Professor van Selms told reporters the churches' support of apartheid was "un-Christian, against both Scripture and Confession". He added:

"I do not accept the decision of the Church Assembly (forbidding public criticism of its laws) because it is against the principles of the Reformation and the constitutional right of free speech."

If Professor Geyser is found guilty, he could be unfrocked and dismissed from the university faculty. EPS, Geneva

Roman Catholics-Protestants in India Discuss Ecumenism

(Bangalore) - A public discussion of the ecumenical attitudes of Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians took place here on the eve of the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches. It is believed to be the first event of its kind in the history of Christianity in India.

Before large crowds on three successive evenings, four theologians dealt with issues raised by both the Assembly and the coming Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. They emphasized the many common bonds which make all Christians brethren in Christ, while admitting that differences of dogma and ecclesiastical order permit no easy optimism about attaining visible unity.

Two Redemptorist priests, the Rev. T. K. Long and the Rev. Finbarr Connolly, interpreted the Roman Catholic position. Speakers from member churches of the World Council were Principal J. Russell Chandran and Dr. J. Robert Nelson, former secretary of the WCC's Department of Faith and Order. Bishop N. C. Sargent, of the Church of South India, Mysore, and the Most Rev. Thomas Pothacamury, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bangalore, presided over the series, which was introduced by Dr. Paul Devanandan, a prominent Protestant ecumenical leader.

EPS, Geneva

German-Israeli, Christian-Jewish Dialogues Asked

(Jerusalem) - Dean Heinrich Grueber of West Berlin, prominent German Protestant leader, made a strong plea for a continuation of German-Israeli and Christian-Jewish dialogues "despite all bitter memories", as he returned home following a three-week visit to this country.

The 70-year old churchman, who was sent to concentration camps by the Hitler régime for his efforts in aiding Jews to escape Nazi tyranny, was completing his fourth visit to Israel as an honoured guest of the government.

Dean Grueber also said he favoured fostering a "true dialogue" between Christians and Jews as distinct from Christian missionary activities among Jews. He said he was opposed to Christian missions to the Jews on the ground that the "churches have forfeited the right to preach" to the Jews "by all that has happened between the Christians and Jews".

EPS, Geneva

Bishop Lilje Asks WCC Intervention if Churches Separated

(Hamburg) - In the event of the churches from East Germany being completely cut off from churches in the West, the World Council of Churches should intervene on their behalf, Lutheran Bishop Hanns Lilje of Hannover has urged.

Writing in Sonntagsblatt, an independent weekly of which he is editor, Bishop Lilje, who is a member of the WCC's policy-making Central Committee, noted that the WCC "has supported the cause of oppressed Christians in Asia and Africa in many courageous statements.

"If the Council were suddenly to maintain silence at this point, one would be obliged to fear that its efforts for Christian unity were not genuine", he said.

Referring to government pressures to separate the two sections of the country, Bishop Lilje writes: "Although the unity of the Church - in the sense of the unity established by God through the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Creed - extends beyond the present frontiers of power-politics, nevertheless Christendom also requires visible corporate unity.

"There is not a single reason which a Christian can recognize which could justify an organic separation of the Church in Germany. Furthermore, if Christians in Germany are prevented from meeting their brothers . . . they will be deprived of a simple and fundamental right which is universally recognized as one of the basic human rights: the right to gather in the name of the faith."

If that happens, he concluded, the World Council should "tell those in power that they have no justification for disregarding this elementary human right".

Last week speaking at a meeting of the Synod of the Lutheran Church in Hannover, Bishop Lilje said reports from East Germany indicate there is an increasingly strong grassroots movement in support of the church, as the result of government pressures against it. He said there has been increased attendance at services and church-sponsored meetings, and that pastors are receiving many more requests than formerly for counsel and guidance.

EPS, Geneva

Swiss Churches Reorganize Mission Bodies

(Lausanne) - A reorganization of relationships between the churches and their missionary societies in French-speaking Switzerland has been recommended by that area's Protestant Missionary Association. The area now has six different missionary societies.

The Association has approved a project to set up a Missions Department to coordinate the activities of the six under the direction of a board of representatives of the churches.

The Protestant Press Service in Geneva commented that the plan is not unrelated, on the regional level, to the plans to form a Division of World Mission and Evangelism in the World Council of Churches. This plan is scheduled to be put into effect following the expected affirmative vote on the integration of the WCC and the International Missionary Council at the WCC's Third Assembly in New Delhi.

EPS, Geneva

German Churches Give DM 40 million to Aid Needy

(Stuttgart) - Protestant churches in Germany raised nearly DM 40,000,000 (\$10,000,000) in the 1959-60 Bread for the World Campaign, according to figures just published here. It was the largest amount ever raised by Evangelical Protestant churches in one campaign. Of the figure DM 31,100,000 was given by churches in West Germany and DM 8,500,000 by churches in East Germany.

More than half of the funds distributed so far have gone to underwrite self-help projects, especially in agriculture, in under-developed countries. Money also has been spent for development of training centres for technicians and for emergency relief following natural disasters.

EPS, Geneva

CCIA Director Denounces Soviet Test

(New York) - "There can be no justification either in the sight of God or in the eyes of men" for the Soviet Union's explosion of the 50-megaton range test bomb, Dr. O. F. Nolde, director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, said in a statement issued here. CCIA is a joint agency of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council.

Charging that the Soviet Union has "flouted world public opinion", the CCIA director pointed out that the World Council of Churches has "consistently questioned the right of any nation to decide on its own responsibility to conduct atomic and nuclear tests when people of other nations in all parts of the world who have not agreed may have to bear the consequences".

"In the degree that their recent tests have increased pollution of the atmosphere, and thus affect adversely the health of people today and generations yet unborn, they must be condemned", he declared. "Unilateral breaking of the moratorium by the USSR invites escalation in nuclear weapons construction, an escalation which man must fervently hope can be and will be avoided."

"Obvious and extensive preparations for atmospheric testing by the Soviet Union throughout the period of the moratorium have raised questions as to its good faith, and made it imperative that an unverified moratorium be replaced by a binding treaty, with provision for inspection and control."

"We trust that world conscience may be stirred and world public opinion consolidated in order that, instead of a general resumption of tests, there may be a resumption of negotiations designed to bring about with all sincerity a reliable treaty." (See EPS No. 40) EPS, Geneva

RC Theologian Says Vatican Council Will Have "Ecumenical Aims"

(Vienna) - A Roman Catholic theologian has told an audience here that the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council called by Pope John XXIII will not be confined to Catholic affairs, "although attempts have been made to restrict it in that way".

The enthusiasm which greeted announcement of plans for the Council, he said, was followed by a certain "soberness", which was due particularly to "the obvious intention of certain Vatican circles to push the question of reunion into the background, although this is the question which Pope John had wished to be the Council's main concern. "Now", he said, "it is certain the Council will be a Council of the Roman Catholic Church with ecumenical aims."

The comments were made by Dr. Hans Küng, professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Tübingen, Germany, in a speech entitled "Will the Vatican Council bring unity between Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox".

"The question of reunion has suddenly become a great concern of the whole Church, and of the world", he said. "There has been a complete change in the attitude of the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church who are now striving for unity, not in the form of a return of the 'separated brethren' to the fold of Rome, but in the form of encounter."

Dr. Küng said the most important outcome of announcement of the Council is the setting up of the permanent Secretariat for Christian Unity.

"Very few theologians had even ventured to hope for this, and if they did hope it might happen then they thought it would not be for several decades. "The secretariat has undoubtedly introduced a new epoch in the history of Christian search for reunion - one that can only be compared with the founding of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in the 17th century", he added.

EPS, Geneva

South African Church Defends Apartheid

(Capetown) - The Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa - largest of the three Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa - has rejected by a large majority the findings of a World Council of Churches' consultation denouncing apartheid held at Cottesloe, Johannesburg, last December.

At its Cape Synod this week, the church rebuked by implication its moderator and other members of its delegation to the Cottesloe conference who have subscribed to the consultation's findings.

The action came only a week after the Synod had re-elected its moderator, Dr. A. J. van der Merwe, for his fifth four-year term over the opposition of the church's conservative elements who favour the government's apartheid policies. The vote was 348 to 168.

Following re-election, Dr. Van der Merwe declared in his formal acceptance speech that "the time is ripe" for Christians of all races to visit each other at worship services and to meet for mutual discussions and prayers.

At the same time, however, he condemned "agitators" who press for the admission of non-whites to white churches, not because they have the same beliefs, but because they belong to different races.

"I regard such intrusion on the sanctity of our worship as something God Himself would condemn", he said. "However, in my own eyes I feel that some of our congregations deviate from our churches by the relentless way they bar some fellow believers of a different race". EPS, Geneva

Vatican Council Aims Discussed

(Paris) - Differences among certain Vatican leaders over what should be the concern and aim of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council are discussed by a French Roman Catholic priest in the current issue of Etudes, an unofficial Roman Catholic journal published here.

Father Rouquette, S.J., writes of the tension existing "between the explicit intentions of John XXIII, who wants to inaugurate a fraternal conversation with our separated brethren, and what seems to be a desire on the part of certain high prelates at the Vatican to oppose this".

Father Rouquette referred to a recent pastoral letter issued by the Archbishop of Barcelona, in which he attacked "certain false concepts of Christian unity".

The substance of the pastoral letter was also contained in an article published in the August 27 issue of Osservatore Romano, official Vatican newspaper, over the signature of Mgr. Pericle Felici, Secretary of the Vatican's Central Preparatory Commission for the Council.

Noting that the Archbishop's letter "assumes particular importance", from the fact that many of the points made were also made by Mgr. Felici, Father Rouquette points out that the Archbishop's letter is "completely negative in tone", and that it appears to characterize all non-Catholics as being in "error and untruth, without shade or distinction".

According to the letter Father Rouquette writes, the Roman Catholic Church has no task except "to open its maternal arms and invite its prodigal sons to rush into them"; and that "it has nothing to learn from non-Catholics". EPS, Geneva

IN BRIEF

A new literacy and writing centre for Africans will be established in Yaounde, Cameroun, by the Committee on World Literacy and Christian Literature of the National Council of Churches (USA). The Committee represents some 40 US mission boards and church groups. It now sponsors the literacy and writing centre at the Mindolo Ecumenical Centre, Northern Rhodesia. A spokesman said the success of this centre had sparked plans for the new one.

* * *

Patriarch German, head of the Serbian Orthodox Church, said on his return to Belgrade following a two-weeks visit to the Soviet Union that the Russian and Serbian churches had "identical views" on the need for promoting world peace and for calling upon all Orthodox churches to join forces in this cause. He said he had invited the Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexei to visit Yugoslavia "at his convenience".

* * *

Sunday morning services will be discontinued from January 1, 1962 in 121 parishes of the Swedish National (Lutheran) Church because of a shortage of clergymen, according to information published by the National Association of Swedish parishes. The Association said the cut-back is necessary because the government refuses to allow the church sufficient funds for an adequate number of clergymen on the grounds that economy measures are necessary.

* * *

Immanuel Baptist Church for English-speaking residents in Madrid, Spain, was formally opened on Sunday, October 22. It has 37 charter members. Principal problems in establishing the new church were the securing of official permission from the Spanish government and finding an adequate meeting place. The church is located in a large four-storey house with a hall for services and rooms for Sunday School classes.

* * *

A report suggesting that the Church of England is failing to meet the needs of overseas students in England will be submitted to the Church Assembly at its forthcoming session. The report, signed by the Bishops of London, Liverpool, and Leicester, calls for more hostel accommodation and suggests that the proposal that African chaplains be appointed to the universities be closely examined. It also asks that a system of commendations be set up so that chaplains and parish clergy will know of Christian students coming under their pastoral care. There are approximately 55,000 overseas students from 130 countries in Britain.

EPS, Geneva

* * *

NOTE TO SUBSCRIBERS: EPS will not be published next week. The next issue will be dated November 20, and will be sent from the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, New Delhi, India. Special coverage of Assembly proceedings will be provided through extra editions of EPS, issued about three times a week from November 20 until December 8. There will be no issue December 15. A Christmas issue will be published December 22. There will be no issues December 29 or January 5. Regular weekly publication will be resumed January 12, 1962.